

Fact Sheet: Advancing the Nation's Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza

Today, The Bush Administration Announced The *Implementation Plan For The National Strategy For Pandemic Influenza*. The President's Homeland Security Advisor, Frances Townsend, discussed the Avian and Pandemic Influenza threat and outlined the Federal Government's preparedness and response steps. The Plan translates the [*National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*](#) into more than 300 actions for Federal departments and agencies and sets clear expectations for State and local governments and other non-Federal entities. It also provides guidance for all Federal departments and agencies on the development of their own plans.

The Administration Is Taking Action To Prepare For A Possible Pandemic. On November 1, 2005, the day the President announced the *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, the Administration also submitted a \$7.1 billion emergency budget supplemental request to Congress for pandemic preparedness funding. The request supports the President's strategy by investing in international health surveillance and containment efforts; medical stockpiles; the domestic capacity to produce emergency supplies of pandemic vaccine and antiviral medications; and preparedness at all levels of government. On December 30, 2005, the President signed the Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Influenza Act, 2006. The Act includes \$3.8 billion for pandemic influenza preparedness, the first installment of the President's request to launch these critical activities. The President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2007 includes a \$2.3 billion allowance to support the next phase of the President's strategy.

The Avian And Pandemic Influenza Threat

Pandemic Influenza Poses A Greater Risk Than Seasonal Influenza. Most Americans are familiar with seasonal influenza or the "flu" - a respiratory illness that makes hundreds of thousands of people in the United States sick every year. For most healthy people, seasonal influenza is not life-threatening. Pandemic influenza is different from seasonal influenza because it occurs when a new strain of influenza emerges that can be transmitted easily from person-to-person and for which people have no immunity. Unlike seasonal influenza, which typically affects the frail and sick, pandemic influenza could present as much risk to the young and healthy.

The Federal Government Is Closely Monitoring An Avian Influenza Virus Known As H5N1. This influenza strain has infected domesticated birds, including chickens, and also migratory and other wild birds in 50 countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa. It has also infected more than 200 people worldwide.

Today, H5N1 Avian Influenza Affects Primarily Birds - This Does Not Signal The Start Of A Pandemic. Unless people come into direct contact with infected birds, it is unlikely they will contract the disease. There are no reported cases of sustained human-to-human transmission of the current strain of avian flu. If the virus develops the capacity for sustained human-to-human transmission, however, it could spread quickly around the world.

Translating The *National Strategy For Pandemic Influenza* Into Action

The Federal Government Is Releasing The National Implementation Plan To Help The Nation Prepare For The Possibility Of A Pandemic. Shortly after announcing the *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, the White House led the development of an *Implementation Plan* for the *National Strategy*. The *Implementation Plan* provides clear direction to Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, communities, and the private sector on the actions that must be taken to prepare for a possible pandemic across the following six functional areas:

- **International Efforts** - Prevent And Contain Outbreaks Abroad
- **Transportation And Borders** - Slow The Arrival And Spread Of A Pandemic
- **Protecting Human Health** - Limit Spread And Mitigate Illness
- **Protecting Animal Health** - Control Influenza With Human Pandemic Potential In Animals
- **Law Enforcement, Public Safety, And Security** - Ensure Civil Order During A Pandemic
- **Planning By Institutions** - Protect Personnel And Ensure Continuity Of Operations

The *Implementation Plan* provides a common frame of reference for understanding the pandemic threat and summarizes key planning considerations for all public and private stakeholders. It also requires that Federal departments and agencies take specific coordinated steps to achieve the goals of the *Strategy* and outlines expectations of non-Federal stakeholders in the United States and abroad. The *Implementation Plan* will be continually updated and revised.

The Importance Of Preparedness By Individuals, Communities, And The Private Sector

Individuals Must Actively Participate. Simple infection-control measures including hand washing and staying home when ill are critical. Individuals should actively participate in their communities' responses.

State And Local Governments Must Prepare. Pandemics are global events, but individual communities experience pandemics as local events. State and local governments, with clear guidance from the Federal Government, should be prepared to implement community-wide measures, such as school closures and suspension of public gatherings, to halt the spread of disease.

The Private Sector Must Prepare. The private sector, with targeted and timely guidance from the Federal Government, should develop plans to provide essential services even in the face of sustained and significant absenteeism. Businesses should also integrate their planning into their communities' planning.

Four Federal Priority Actions In The *Implementation Plan*

1. Advance International Capacity For Early Warning And Response.

- **Advance International Cooperation:** Working through the U.S.-initiated International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, secure international commitment to transparency, scientific cooperation, rapid reporting of human and animal cases, and sharing of data and viral isolates.
- **Build International Capacity:** Provide technical assistance to build veterinary and public health capacity in at-risk countries and to detect and contain animal and human outbreaks of avian influenza, including development and exercise of preparedness plans.
- **Ensure Rapid Response:** Develop the Federal Government's capability to respond rapidly, either independently or in support of an international response, to animal or human outbreaks of influenza with pandemic potential for purposes of assessment and containment.

2. Limit The Arrival And Spread Of A Pandemic.

- **Ensure Early Warning And Situational Awareness:** Enhance domestic avian influenza surveillance in humans, wild birds, and poultry.

- **Establish A Border And Transportation Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive border and transportation strategy that strikes a balance between efficacy of interventions to delay and limit the spread of disease and the economic and societal consequences, international implications, and operational feasibility of these interventions.
- **Establish Screening Protocols And Implementation Agreements:** Establish arrangements with international partners to voluntarily limit travel and establish screening for travelers from affected areas.

3. Provide Clear Guidance To All Stakeholders.

- **Ensure Effective Risk Communication:** Implement educational and risk communications programs to increase national and international awareness of the risks of avian influenza and appropriate behaviors to reduce these risks. Ensure that timely, accurate, and credible information is provided by spokespeople at all levels of government during an outbreak.
- **Provide Guidance On Distributing Urgent Resources:** Develop and share with State, local, and tribal public health officials and the medical community strategies for optimizing the allocation of scarce medical resources during periods of sharp surges in the need for medical services and mechanisms for incorporating additional health care providers within defined settings.
- **Provide Comprehensive Guidance To Limit The Spread Of Disease:** Develop for State, local, and tribal partners a template for community containment that builds upon data available from state-of-the art modeling and scientific understanding of influenza biology and patterns of transmission.
- **Provide Clear Guidance For The Public And Private Sectors:** Develop pandemic planning guidance for private sector, Federal, State, local, and tribal entities.

4. Accelerate The Development Of Countermeasures.

- **Develop Rapid Diagnostics:** Support development of rapid, sensitive, and accurate diagnostic tests, to be used in the clinical setting and for screening.
- **Establish Stockpiles Of Vaccine And Antiviral Medications:** Build stockpiles of pre-pandemic vaccine and antiviral medications and define strategies for use.
- **Advance Technology And Production Capacity For Influenza Vaccine:** Develop cell-based vaccine-manufacturing methods, increase domestic vaccine production capacity, and advance the development of next-generation influenza diagnostics and countermeasures, including the most effective methods of preparing for and responding to a surge in demand for medical services.

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